

Message Text

SECRET

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51

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 AF-04 EUR-08

INR-05 CIAE-00 SP-02 SAM-01 SAB-01 ACDA-05 SAJ-01

/056 W

----- 065001

R 081045Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1153

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CNO WASHDC

COMIDEASTFOR

JCS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANAA

SECDEF WASHDC

USNATO

USNMR SHAPE

S E C R E T JIDDA 3249

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (SHEAR, HAROLD), MARR, XF, SA, US, SO

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA

REF: A. JIDDA 3197 (NOTAL)

B. JIDDA 3234

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BEGIN SUMMARY:

IN CALL BY CINCUSNAVEUR ON SAUDI MINDEF PRINCE SULTAN, ADMIRAL SHEAR MADE POINT THAT DISTURBINGLY HIGH LEVEL OF SOVIET ACTIVITY IN RED SEA/GULF OF ADEN GREATLY FACILITATED BY SOVIET INSTALLATIONS IN SOMALIA ABOUT WHICH US HAD EXTENSIVE INFORMATION. SULTAN SAID THIS OF GREAT CONCERN TO SAUDI ARABIA AND THAT SOMALI PRESIDENT DURING RECENT VISIT HAD CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF SOVIET BASE FACILITIES. HE HAD OFFERED SAUDIS TO SEND AN INSPECTION TEAM TO VERIFY THIS. SULTAN SAID OFFER WAS NOT MADE WITH EXPECTATION IT WOULD BE ACCEPTED AND SULTAN DID NOT GIVE IMPRESSION THAT SAG WAS IN FACT DETERMINED TO TAKE SIAD BARRE UP ON IT. SULTAN ASKED IF WE COULD PROVIDE CORROBORATIVE INFORMATION ON EXISTENCE OF BASES. ADMIRAL ASSURED SULTAN THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO NAVAL INTELLIGENCE WOULD BE GIVEN TO AMBASSADOR AKINS.

END SUMMARY

1. DURING CALL BY CINCUSNAVEUR ADMIRAL SHEAR ON MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION PRINCE SULTAN BIN ABD AL-AZIZ MAY 7, ADMIRAL REMARKED THAT ARABIAN PENINSULA OCCUPIED A MOST STRATEGIC LOCATION, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARDS TO ITS PROLONGED EASTERN AND WESTERN COASTLINES. SULTAN BROKE IN TO EXPRESS HIS AWARENESS AND FULL AGREEMENT WITH THIS CONCEPT. ADMIRAL WENT ON TO SAY THAT AS COMMANDER OF ALL U.S. NAVAL UNITS IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST HE RECEIVED EXHAUSTIVE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION DAILY ON SOVIET MOVEMENTS IN THE RED SEA, THE GULF OF ADEN, AND THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT WAS APPARENT TO HIM THAT THE DISTURBINGLY HIGH LEVEL OF SOVIET ACTIVITY WAS CENTERED PARTLY UPON THE SOVIET STRONG POSITION IN ADEN, BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY UPON THE EXTENSIVE SOVIET FACILITIES IN SOMALIA AT BERBERA. IN BERBERA THE SOVIETS HAD A SIGNIFICANT NAVAL BASE, COMMUNICATIONS CENTER, A LARGE MILITARY AIRPORT, AND ALL OF THE SUPPORT FACILITIES NECESSARY FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF THESE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

2. SULTAN SAID THIS WAS A MATTER OF UTMOST CONCERN TO THE
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SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT (SAG). HE NOTED PRESIDENT SIAD (WHO DEPARTED SAUDI ARABIA MAY 5) HAD IN A FINAL COMMUNIQUE CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF ANY SOVIET BASE FACILITIES IN SOMALIA (REF B). SIAD HAD EVEN ASKED THE SAUDIS--IF THEY DOUBTED HIS WORD--TO SEND AN INSPECTION TEAM TO SOMALIA TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES. SULTAN SAID THE WAY THE OFFER WAS MADE, IT OBVIOUSLY WAS NOT MEANT TO BE ACCEPTED. AFTER SIAD HAD MADE THIS STATEMENT,

SULTAN SAID THE SAG HAD IN PRIVATE STRONGLY PRESSED SIAD ON THIS ISSUE, AND HE HAD REITERATED HIS CATEGORICAL DENIAL OF A SOVIET BASE PRESENCE.

3. SULTAN REMARKED THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAD SEVERAL POINTS OF FRICTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA. THEY DOUBTED FOR INSTANCE WHETHER THE POLICY OF THAT STATE WAS IN FACT BASED UPON THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS CODE (SHARIA)--AS SIAD REPEATEDLY ASSURED THEM. BUT SULTAN SAW THE ISSUE OF SOVIET INFLUENCE AND PENETRATION AS OVERREACHING. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST REGRETTABLE NOW THAT THE SOVIET UNION'S PRESENCE IN EGYPT HAD BEEN REDUCED THANKS TO ANWAR SADAT, IF IT WERE ALLOWED TO REESTABLISH ITSELF AT THE OTHER END OF THE RED SEA. SULTAN SAID THE SAG WOULD NOT OF COURSE OBJECT TO AN ARAB GOVERNMENT BUYING ARMS FROM ANY SOURCE IT WISHED, EAST OR WEST; OR RECEIVING EXPERTS TO TRAIN ITS TROOPS IN THE USE OF SUCH WEAPONRY. BUT WHEN THE FOREIGN PRESENCE ASSUMED BASE PROPORTIONS, THAT WAS ANOTHER QUESTION, BECAUSE SAUDI ARABIA WAS AGAINST FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN THE ARAB WORLD.

4. PRINCE SULTAN ASKED ADMIRAL SHEAR IF HE COULD PROVIDE HIM WITH CORROBORATIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN BERBERA, AND SPECIFICALLY REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. SULTAN REMARKED SUCH A REQUEST HAD ALSO BEEN MADE OF AMBASSADOR AKINS, AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S RECENT MEETING WITH KING KHALID (REFTEL A).

5. ADMIRAL SHEAR ASSURED PRINCE SULTAN THAT THE INFORMATION IN THE HANDS OF U.S. NAVAL INTELLIGENCE WAS COPIOUS AND ACCURATE, AND HE WOULD SEE THAT AMBASSADOR AKINS RECEIVED WHAT WAS AVAILABLE. HE SUGGESTED THAT UPON STUDYING THE MATERIALS,

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SULTAN MIGHT WISH TO TAKE UP THE SOMALI OFFER AND ACTUALLY DISPATCH A TEAM TO SOMALIA TO SEE WHAT THE SITUATION WAS LIKE ON THE GROUND. SULTAN SAID THIS MIGHT BE DONE; HE ADDED THE ISSUE OF A SOVIET PRESENCE WOULD IN THAT CASE ALSO BE FURTHER DISCUSSED BY SAUDI ARABIA AND SOME OF ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS.

6. WITH REGARD TO THE PDRY, SULTAN NOTED THERE WERE SOME SENSITIVE POLITICAL CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SAG AND THE GOVERNMENT IN ADEN AND SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THAT COUNTRY WHICH WE WOULD REGARD AS SIGNIFICANT. SULTAN NOTED THAT AS PART OF THE SAG'S EFFORTS TO CONTROL RADICAL INFLUENCE IN THE BABA AL MANDEB AREA, IT HAD RENTED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS

THE ISLAND OF PERIM TO ASSURE ITS OCCUPATION BY ARAB
TROOPS.

7. OTHER TOPICS IN ADMIRAL SHEAR'S CONVERSATION WILL
BEDISCUSSED IN SEPTELS. AKINS

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NNN

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